

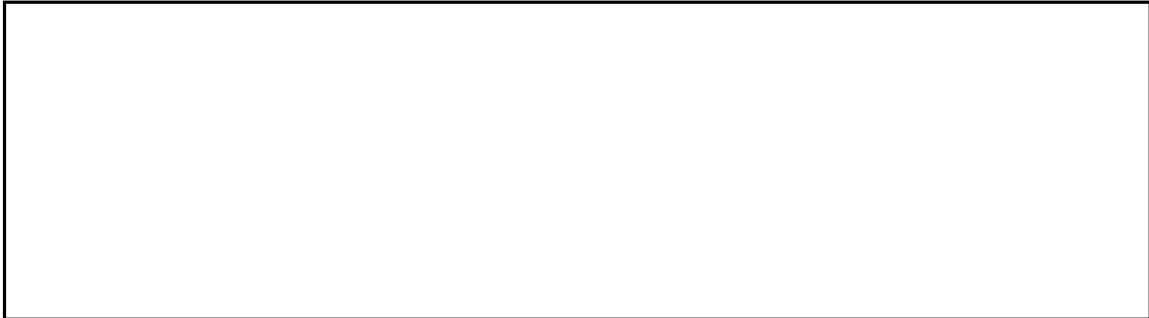
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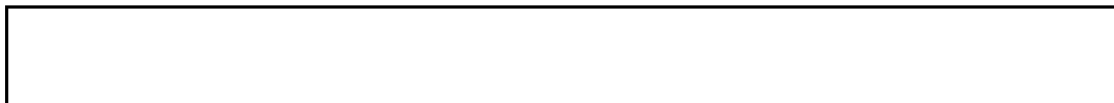
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Icelandic Media Reacts to Foreign Minister's
Moscow Trip

Icelandic Foreign Minister Agustsson's visit to the USSR from April 1-9 has generated complaints and allegations in the media of increased Soviet influence in Iceland.

In a television interview on April 18, Agustsson was questioned closely about the new Soviet-Icelandic cultural agreement. He denied that the agreement would facilitate Soviet involvement in Nordic affairs, and rejected speculation that the USSR expects Icelandic support for membership in the Nordic Council.

The US Embassy in Reykjavik has learned that the Soviets intend to initiate a "massive" information and cultural program in Iceland and reportedly have put out "feelers" for an institutional link to the Nordic Council.

The conservative daily Morgunbladid, the official newspaper of one of the government coalition partners, began a campaign immediately following Agustsson's return from Moscow criticizing Icelandic-Soviet relations. Morgunbladid's latest barrage was directed at the new Soviet Ambassador's alleged espionage career.

The media campaign has been an embarrassment to the Icelandic government. Although relations with the Soviets have been strained at times, Reykjavik has tried to bill the Agustsson trip as a great success.

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Italian Labor Unity Question Still Unresolved

A majority of Italy's top labor leaders last week endorsed in principle the eventual formation of a single national labor organization, but the minority that fears Communist domination of the labor movement is strong enough to block implementation of the plan in the near future.

The majority vote for unification resulted mainly from the unanimous support given by representatives of Italy's largest labor organization--the Communist-dominated General Confederation of Italian Workers (CGIL). Their support alone accounted for 65 percent of the vote in favor of unification.

Any effort to put the plan into effect, however, will be hindered by dissent within the other two major labor organizations--the Christian Democratic-oriented Confederation of Trade Unions (CISL) and the Union of Italian Labor (UIL), a mixture of Social Democrats, Socialists, and Republicans. Opponents of labor unity have enough strength within both organizations to prevent either from taking the next step on the way to a single national labor union--the dissolution of the existing confederations.

Apart from the bitter personal rivalries that divide Italian labor leaders, opposition to merger of the three confederations centers on the question of whether they can achieve genuine separation from the country's political parties. Those against merger maintain that, without such autonomy, Communist control of the new organization would be assured.

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Communist labor leaders have gone through the motions of resigning their party positions, but labor unity opponents remain unconvinced. Their skepticism was undoubtedly reinforced by the prominent role given to the top Communist labor leader in the party's recent national congress.

The Communist answer to opponents of the merger has been a call to press ahead toward unification with "those who are willing," even at the risk of a split in the labor movement. In addition to the enhanced economic leverage it would give them, the Communists see labor unification as another way of conditioning the Christian Democrats to eventual acceptance of Communist participation in the government.

Further decisions on labor unification are likely to be deferred until after the important nationwide local elections this June. In the meantime, the labor leaders will at least be able to present a unified front in reacting to the recent upsurge in violence by right and left-wing extremists. They voted to protest the "fascist" provocations by calling two brief general strikes, one last week and the other yesterday.

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